



# Big Bethel AME Church

220 Auburn Avenue

Big Bethel served as “Sweet Auburn’s City Hall,” the site of mass meetings to improve the lives of Atlanta’s blacks in the first half of the 20th century. The church established the Gate City Colored School, the first public school for black students in the city, and founded Morris Brown College. And here residents organized a drive that led to the construction of the first public high school for blacks in the Southeast, Booker T. Washington High School.

*Bethel Church was the battleground. They came down here to talk to the black folks about this bond issue because the rich folks were not in favor of it.... we were in there like sardines...because we knew we needed a school.*

Dr. Homer E. Nash, *Living Atlanta*



Pupils at the Gate City Colored School





# Ebenezer Baptist Church

The world of young Martin Luther King, Jr., revolved around Ebenezer Baptist Church. Here his grandfather and father preached in favor of desegregation, voting rights, and equal pay — social issues he would later embrace and espouse. His grandmother and mother directed the choir and other church groups. He was nourished spiritually and instilled with a tradition of leadership and activism that would profoundly influence his life — and the nation's.



As an adult, Martin Luther King, Jr., (far left and below) joined his father (left) as co-pastor, a position he held when he was assassinated in 1968. "Daddy King" retired as pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1975.

Visit the historic church building, to your left across Auburn Avenue, where the National Park Service presents interpretive programs and special events. The congregation currently worships in the building to your right.





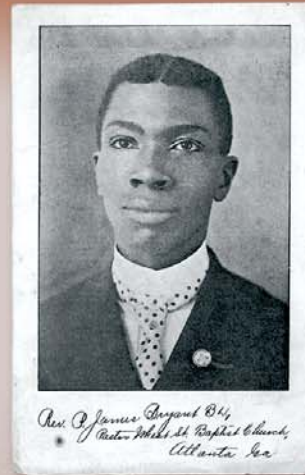


# Wheat Street Baptist Church

365 Auburn Avenue

This church and its pastors have been a guiding force in Atlanta's black community since the late 1800s, when Auburn Avenue was known as Wheat Street. Rev. Peter James Bryant was an associate editor of the *Voice of The Negro* magazine and an early advocate for equal justice and voting rights. Rev. William Holmes Borders led boycotts that resulted in desegregating the city's buses and downtown stores. Within these walls, blacks initiated the establishment of a credit union, low-rent housing, Butler Street YMCA, and other facilities to create a self-sufficient community.

*The black preachers furnished the people power.....  
The preachers marched...were present at the  
bus protest...would go to City Hall...would attend  
the voter education meetings.* Rev. William Holmes Borders



The Rev. Peter James Bryant, pastor from 1896 to 1928, led efforts to establish the Butler Street YMCA and a high school for blacks.

The Rev. William Holmes Borders, shown with his family, served as pastor from 1937 to 1985.

